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# Captain Jakobsen's Trip in the Gilyak Region and on the Island of Sakhalin /Kapitän Jakobsen's Reisen im Gebiete der Giljaken und auf der Insel Sachalin/

by Otto Genest

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[378] Captain Jakobsen's Travels in the Region of the Gilyak and on Sakhalin Island.
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121 Jakobsen's first sojourn in the land of the Goldi (compare number 10 of the current volume of the periodical, p. 153 [see Goldi Source 18: Genest--Analyst] was followed by a trip into the territory of the Gilyak through which he had to pass in order to reach Nikolayevsk. He touched the same territory for a second time when on his return from Sakhalin Island, he started his journey up the Amur River towards the Ussuri and North Korea at the end of January 1885. Both times he had only a little time at his disposal: in September of 1884 he had to rush to get to Nikolayevsk as soon as possible in order to take advantage of an opportunity to cross over to Sakhalin; January 1885 he was pressing with all his power to conclude his activities since by force of circumstances he had lost so much time on Sakhalin that he was afraid of having to extend his travels too much if he should stop for a detailed study of the Gilyak. It is therefore understandable that his collections made in the territory of the Gilyak are far inferior to those made in the land of the Goldi as regards copiousness and variety. Also the information he was able to gather from his own observation or through his inquiries understandably gives only a hazy picture of the life and activities of this people. Unfortunately he only had little opportunity to become acquainted with the representatives of the Gilyak people living on Sakhalin Island and thus to fill the gaps of his account of this people. Nevertheless the entries in his diary present several things of interest, but expecially valuable is the fact that he was permitted to observe a bear festival in the Gilyak village Vaida above Nikolayevsk, the procedure of which he has described in great detail.

101 The Gilyak have been designated as Hyperboreans or
142 Arctics by Rittich (1), as Northern Asiatics of uncertain

1. Die Ethnographie Russlands, supplementary issue 54 to Petermann's Mittheilungen, p. 19.

position within the system by Peschel (2). They are

2. Peschel-Kirchoff, Völkerkunde (5th

101 edition), p. 390 and note 7. Veniukov's
142 observation that the language of the Gilyak is radically different from that of the Tungus is completely confirmed by Jakobsen. That is the reason for the wording of the text.

differentiated from the neighboring Goldi with regard to language whereas in biological make-up they are only slightly different from them. According to photographs that the traveller acquired on the spot and has brought with him, the beard growth of the Gilyak seems to be somewhat heavier than that of the Goldi, without however, reaching the thick-
101 ness of growth of the Ainu on Sakhalin Island. Originally they probably occupied the bank of the Amur up to the Gorin, while nowadays the southern boundary of their territory lies about 100 versts above Nikolayevsk and their former territory is now inhabited by the transitional people that we mentioned repeatedly in number 10 of this volume [see Goldi source 18: Genest--Analyst]. They occupy the northern part of Sakhalin Island but one will also encounter them among the Ainu in the southern part of the island where they probably came as laborers for the Japanese fishers (3) or

3. We will have more to say below about the Japanese fishers on Sakhalin Island. Jakobsen encountered Gilyak even on Aniva Bay.

361 for the purpose of hunting sable. Formerly their settle-
563 ments were particularly numerous along the shallow shore
166 of the island across from the mouth of the Amur. But these
226 had [379] disappeared by the time Jakobsen passed along
231 this stretch of shore because the Gilyak who used to live
133 there had fled from the maltreatments of the convicts deported to Sakhalin Island. They had, however, established new settlements near their former residences, for the traveller observed a large number of boats the occupants of which were Gilyak engaged in fishing in the sound (1).

1. In all these boats there were also dogs which were set on land to pull the boats along whenever the wind was against the fishermen as well as whenever they were struggling against the strong north-south current that predominates in the Tatar Strait.

161 It is as impossible to estimate with any certainty the number
of Gilyak, as it is the number of Goldi. Rittich estimates
their number to be about 3000. On the Amur Jakobsen found
quite a large number of villages; on Sakhalin Island, on the
other hand, there were far fewer villages.
439 Like their neighbors, the Gilyak are fishermen and hunters;
433 only now and then do they engage in trading. For instance, in
221 case there is among them a scarcity of food--something which
342 happens quite often--they import from the mainland fish and
flour for the inhabitants of Sakhalin. In accordance with their
primary occupations they spend their summers on the river
banks while in winter they move into the mountains and roam
through the woods. I am unable to say with certainty whether
they have summer and winter dwellings like the Goldi, but I
think such may be assumed from the indications Jakobsen
342 gives. On his return from Sakhalin in January 1885, Jakobsen
352 found Gilyak villages near the mouth of the Amur River that
354 consisted of houses quite similar to those I described as the
171 winter houses of the Goldi. The typical, enormous clay-
brick ovens and the benches, warmed by the pipes, along the
342 walls are also to be found in these houses. On the other hand,
361 the traveller found in September 1884 above Nikolayevsk a
whole number of Gilyak villages that were at a considerable
distance from the river bank, while the summer settlements
of the Goldi by their nature as fishing villages used to be
situated right by the river. One might conclude from this,
perhaps, that these Gilyak villages were not simply fishing
villages for the summer, but served as dwellings for the
whole year; unless one wanted to assume that the Gilyak were
forced to withdraw from the immediate neighborhood of the
river in summer because of the partically marshy and there-
fore unhealthy river bank. In Sakhalin, moreover, there was
not a trace of the larger houses of the Gilyak such as those
mentioned above; rather, the huts were only small and half
under-ground, so that they had a certain similarity to the
511 dwellings of the Eskimos in Labrador and in Alaska. They
515 offer a very unenviable abode for the European traveller,
for with their confined space one can hardly avoid close con-
tact with the inhabitants and the dangers connected with that,
in short, being tormented by a multitude of vermin. In addition
the atmosphere created by the crowd of people present, by
the presence of the dogs, by the manifold provisions hung up
for drying or smoking, and by the smoke which can only
511 escape with difficulty, is hardly bearable. The large houses
136 on the main land are in better condition, but they, too, have

511 grave drawbacks. For one thing they have an astounding number
136 of mice which attain the size of rats, almost, and which are so bold that they nibble at the clothes that the inhabitants are wearing on their body. Jakobsen was told that they even gnaw at the fingers of the little children.

171 The clothing of the Gilyak of the male and female sex is gen-
291 erally like that of the Goldi; they also use the same materials:
177 fish skin, hides and Chinese or Russian cloths. The festoons customary among the Goldi women (see above, number XI, p. 173) [see Goldi source 18: Genest--Analyst] do not exist among Gilyak women; the latter generally seem to be interested less in gracefulness than durability in their clothing. The curious belt worn not only by the Goldi but also by the transitional people mentioned repeatedly earlier, is also in use among the Gilyak and with the
177 same appendages as there. It might be mentioned right here, also,
372 that, aside from stone and steel for lighting a fire, matches are already in use with them in boxes which are either made by the
171 Gilyak or imported from the Russians. The arms of the Gilyak
411 are the same as those of the Goldi. Everywhere they still use
531 bow and arrows, knives and lances, and the last-named weapon often appears in beautifully worked models with inlaid figures of
227 silver or copper. For fishing they use nets which they make them-
411 selves, angling hooks and harpoon-like instruments which at
501 times have three to four spikes. To move on the water they use larger boats and skiffs made of birch bark which go by the name
492 of amerotscha; on land they travel in winter by narrow sleds to
231 which are harnessed eight to ten dogs. For that reason one will find a large number of dogs in the Gilyak settlements just as in the Goldi villages. These dogs are highly vicious and on occasion even dangerous for the stranger.

171 During his brief stay among the Gilyak, Jakobsen was of course
751 unable to form a judgment of their character; nevertheless his
301 experiences are sufficient to make the following assertion: The Gilyak are no less superstitious than their neighbors. The amulets (1) against diseases which one so often encounters

1. Be it noted on this occasion that Gilyak virgins wear rings on their chests as amulets and no offer however high can induce them to sell them. All the same, our traveller was able to acquire such a ring from an old Gilyak who had stolen it. The latter did not dare to offer it for sale to Jakobsen in the village itself, but met him on the river to conclude the bargain there. The traveller believed in this case that it would be permissible to silence his conscience and to enter upon the bargain.

171 among the Goldi, are in use throughout the Gilyak people
751 and are essentially the same as those discussed earlier
301 (Number XIII, p. 207) [see Goldi source 18: Genest--
Analyst]. The Gilyak on Sakhalin Island whose houses
372 Jakobsen entered were likewise highly indignant whenever
462 he left the house with a lighted pipe or when his companions
776 extinguished the fire burning in a hut by pouring water on it.
For in their opinion such things tended to conjure up destruction not only over the inhabitants of the one hut but over the whole tribe. The inhabitants of one house in the village of Varki below Nikolayevsk predicted the same result when Jakobsen was about to light a fire for making the tea, and they forced him to wait till the house-wife saw to this task, since, in their opinion, this was a job only to be performed by her. Plainly this conduct has its basis in the sacred position of fire. [380] Though this no longer leads to a personification of a fire god among the Goldi and the Gilyak, it no doubt existed among them at one time as it still does today among the Buryat.

776 The system of gods of the Gilyak is in no way behind that
171 of the Goldi in variety. Human and animal figures in color-
825 ful diversity serve as representations of celestial beings.
796 Here, too, there is a great similarity to the religious conceptions of the Goldi; the most important difference seems to me the one that was touched upon earlier (XIV, p. 223), [see Goldi source 18: Genest--Analyst] the fact that the Goldi pay zealous homage to the tiger while the Gilyak do honor to
796 the bear. It is true, though, that this homage is disastrous
415 to the bears since it means keeping a number of these
531 animals imprisoned in the cages in every village and killing
231 them at a bear festival. Before the festival the bears are fed plentifully for an extended time by means of large wooden spoons prepared especially for the purpose and decorated
796 with ingenious carvings. These bear festivals are usually held late in autumn and in winter and they are affairs of the greatest importance to their celebrators. I will now give the description of the festival that Jakobsen had the opportunity of observing in person.

796 On the 7th of February, 1885, the traveller arrived in
622 the early morning at the Gilyak village Vaida about 30 versts
574 above Nikolayevsk, where, as he had been informed, a festival was to take place on that day. From several other villages, some of which were considerable distances away large numbers of guests had come in already, and the whole place was astir in anticipation of the festival at hand. The opening of the bear festival is in the hands of the village

796 elder who also determines how many and which bears are
622 to be killed by the consent of their owners, for it is not the
574 village as such but individuals in it who are the owners of
the captured animals. Once an agreement has been reached
796 on this point the animals intended for slaughter are led from
777 house to house several weeks before the fixed date and must
spend a night in each, in order to bring its inhabitants luck
796 by their stay. During this time the animals get only a little
food, but at the end of it they are indemnified for their in-
voluntary fast by being taken throughout the night from house
to house and fed the choicest tidbits, namely, fresh and dried
fish, berries and a thick gruel prepared from millet.

796 While making the rounds through the village, the bears are
563 irritated by being pricked, and they are enraged by a mock
hunt staged on them with lances. The bears are ones that have
been captured young in the woods or bought full-grown from
the Chinese or Manchu who are also quite numerous in the
796 Gilyak territory. During the mock-hunt the Gilyak naturally
take the precaution of tying the animals in such a way that
they cannot easily get at their tormentors. Close behind the
front legs they tie a strap around their body to which are
attached rings through which are run iron chains. To these
chains, in turn, they fasten thick belts of seal hide and of
considerable length, in such a way that some go forward and
others backward. A number of Gilyak take hold of these belts
and in this way they are able to force the bear to stand com-
pletely still by alternately tightening the belts depending on
whether the bear is turned frontwards or backwards when it
wants to attack its leaders.

796 Outside the village there is a kind of fence made of sturdy
417 willow sticks, which has an opening for an avenue that is also
fenced in on both sides with similar willow sticks. Inside
this enclosure the bear, after it has finished its tour through
796 the village, is tied between two tree trunks. There it is left
541 to itself for a while, while the inhabitants of the village amuse
231 themselves with the dog race almost always held at these
437 celebrations. In the village visited by Jakobsen they also had
a track especially constructed for this purpose, which, how-
ever, was not very long. After the dogs had been led to the
track by their owners and placed next to each other, they
were let loose at intervals of a few seconds, but they all
arrived at the finish about the same time. There is, by the
way, no idea of winning prizes at this race, since such do
not even exist. Rather, it might be called a purchasing race
since the race serves to place the good qualities of the dogs
in the right light and thus to arouse a desire for buying. The

796 sled race has the same purpose and is likewise held on this
541 occasion. Here it does not matter either whether the draught
231 dogs show outstanding speed. This is shown by the fact that
437 only one sled races along the track at time; the test is,
rather, how accurately the team and especially its leading
dog run along the prescribed route. Such leader dogs, which
show themselves to be particularly reliable, especially in
understanding and following exactly the calls of the leaders,
are very highly valued among the Gilyak who pay from 30 to
796 60 rubles for them. It was interesting to watch how, to take
541 part in the race, some of the Gilyak who were standing by the
522 track threw themselves on the sleds that travelled by them at
a speed almost equal to that of an express train. Some Gilyak
succeeded very well in this attempt; others, on the other hand,
were thrown along some distance by the speeding sleds and
sometimes suffered grave injuries, which they bore, however
with the best good humor despite the pain and the ridicule of
their luckier companions.

796 At the end of the race, the whole crowd, closely followed
by the traveller, of course, went back to the enclosure
mentioned above and released the bear from its prison. Then
the entire male population of Vaida, together with the guests
from outside—altogether more than 100 persons—led the
bear down the hill on which the fence was erected, to the vil-
lage. On the way, one half pulled the bear forward by the belts
described above since it gave indications of no longer wanting
796 to follow its tormentors willingly. The others steered the bear
522 more or less by means of the belts attached to its back. During
this, the company raised a terrible racket. Now both parties
would shout methods of procedure at each other, now one or
another would fall into the deep snow to the amusement of his
companions, and those that came after him would kick and
jostle him in the most merciless manner, without this, how-
796 ever, spoiling his good humor in any way. Then again, the
bear would attempt to seize one of its tormentors with its
teeth and claws and it always had to endure a resounding,
scornful laughter if it did not succeed. In short, it was a
highly agitated scene that presented itself here to the eyes of
our traveller. When they arrived in the village, [381] they
stopped first of all in front of the house in which the bear had
enjoyed its last meal the evening before. He : a beam about
three meters long had been attached to a stand in front of the
door in such a manner that it hung down vertically about a
796 meter above the ground. Beside this beam there stood six to
533 eight girls and women who were provided with club-like sticks

796 with which they hit the beam rhythmically, two slow hits
533 followed by one fast one; this activity was not accompanied
by any songs. They led the bear slowly past these women and
796 then placed it so that its head was turned towards the house,
as though he should take another good look at the place where
he had received its last nourishment from the inhabitants of
the village. After a very brief halt they then dragged it further
along to the river bank and then forced it to go on the ice to
about the middle of the river. Thereupon the whole crowd
returned to the village and moved to the house inhabited by the
former owner of the bear. Here the bear was awaited by a
very similar reception as that described above, except that in
this place they forced the bear to stick its head inside the house
and thus, in a way, to take leave from its master and nourisher.
Then he was again led to the enclosure, and there they tied
him up as before.

Only now had the moment come in which the bear was to lose its life. Amid general silence which was also commanded with solemn mien to our traveller, an old Gilyak--whether he was the owner of the animal or not is not indicated in Jakobsen's account--stepped forth from the crowd and grasped bow and arrows which were lying there ready for him. Then he slowly took off his under-jacket, wrapped some leather belts around his left hand in order not to injure it with the bow string, and picked out an arrow with much solemnity and circumstance which made a rather comical impression, and finally he placed the arrow on the bow. At first it seemed as though he was going to shoot in the air because he raised his bow while he stretched it. Then he lowered it again very slowly till the arrow was directed exactly at the bear's heart, and then he shot it off. The bear fell down on the spot, as far its bonds permitted it to do so, it rolled to and fro a few times, and then died after a few convulsive movements, thus proving what a steady hand the archer had preserved in spite of his old age. During this whole procedure, which lasted rather long, there reigned a breathless silence among the Gilyak standing around the fence, and this created an even more solemn impression since it was in such sharp contrast to the foregoing deafening tumult.

After the bear's death its former owner came and embraced the animal tenderly like a dear friend of whom he wanted to take leave. Then they pulled a number of the sticks of the fence out of the ground and laid them down to serve the dead bear as a resting place. Later they drag the animal into its owner's house, as the traveller was told, since he did not have the time to await the end of the festival. In the house they lay the bear

796 on a bed of fir twigs as on a bed of state and the participants
in the festival visit it for the last time. After two or three
days they pull off its hide and the meat is distributed among
796 the guests who eat it with relish. There is a strange con-
825 tradiction in these bear festivals. On the one hand, they honor
531 the bear as a celestial being, as is proved not only by its
pictures serving as idols and amulets but also by the tender
attentions that they show the animal during its imprisonment.
For this speaks also the solemn way of killing it, as well as
the ceremonious procedure used in treating the corpse; also,
the circumstance not mentioned above, that the traveller was
not allowed to take with him one of the willow sticks of the
fence which was later used for the bed of the dead bear. He
would all the sooner have done so since the stick was distin-
796 guished by tasteful carving. On the other hand, they are not
825 afraid to kill this animal that they honor as a divine being,
756 and by a death, even, that is only the conclusion of a rather
barbaric torture. Furthermore it is a curious circumstance
that during the whole course of the festival, as far as Jakobsen
was able to observe it, the shaman was not even visible, even
though the latter plays such an outstanding role at all the
796 religious ceremonies of the Amur peoples. What, besides, is
782 the purpose of leading the bear out on the ice of the river?
776 [in the bear festival; see p. 381--Analyst] Should it suggest
the idea that the animal is to be offered as a sacrifice to the
river honored as a god? And if this is really the case, what
a strange idea it is to sacrifice one god to another and to eat
him up in the end. And why don't they kill the bear on the
river bank and let at least its blood flow into the water, just
as the fish gods are entrusted to its waves? What, further-
more, is this sacrifice meant to effect? and what is its
nature? Are we to imagine it as a sacrifice of thanks offered
up to the river dispensing blessing and nourishment, or as a
sacrifice of expiation by which the river is supposed to be
made favorable to the dwellers near it, because the latter are
well aware of their dependence on the river and its power to
bring them destruction? In the former case one would think
that the celebration would take place as soon as possible after
the time fishing ended, that is, about September or beginning
October, while these festivals actually are not till later. The
second assumption does not agree, again, with the circum-
stance that the nature of the festival is a thoroughly joyful
one, as is proved, at least to my mind, by the description
of it given above. This is not contradicted, either, by the
solemn silence which reigns during the lethal shot and the
796 preparation for it. For it is by no means necessary to see

796 in this the proof of seriousness or mourning; rather, it is entirely enough to assume that in this way they want to avoid making the archer unsteady by noisy behavior, and thus to bring him into the danger of missing his mark. Or is the torture that they impose on the poor animal before its death meant to be a symbol of the serious nature of this festival? Even this conception seems untenable to me, for why should one torment an expiatory sacrifice that already has to suffer enough by its innocent death, as happens in this case; and, besides, does not the cruel treatment of the bear before its death give the impression of proceeding entirely from the overbubbling festive joy of the celebrators? Unfortunately, the traveller was unable to give any hints as to the significance of the ceremonies described, since the Gilyak were themselves unable to explain them. They celebrated [382] the festival the way their fathers and forefathers had celebrated it, without worrying any further about the meaning of the various actions. Jakobsen's friends in Nikolayevsk were equally unable to give him adequate explanations on this subject. Probably, therefore, we need more frequent and more detailed observation than is available today before we can see into the matter clearly.

115 173 539 Finally, a saga current among the Gilyak which Jakobsen heard from a Russian station master who had lived in their territory for a long time. It goes as follows: A long, long time ago there appeared on the Amur coming from the east a small vessel full of enormously strong people of a dark complexion. These went ashore, attacked the villages, burned them down, and, without distinguishing age or sex, killed and ate all the inhabitants that they could lay hands on. Sailing up the river, they acted in the same fashion in the land of the Goldi till finally the invaded tribes recovered from their terror, banded together and moved in large hordes against the barbaric enemy, whom they then defeated in a bitter battle. All the cannibals were killed and their ship was destroyed. From this time on, the Gilyak always add, no more foreign people came to the Amur River from the east up to the time when the Russians appeared at the mouth of the river and took possession of the land.